



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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April 29, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – LARK GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of the Lark Group Home (Lark or Agency). Lark contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Lark is a six-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 9-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Lark was providing services for six Los Angeles County DCFS children. Lark is located in San Bernardino County.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review was to verify whether Lark was providing the services outlined in its Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of Lark's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, facility inspection, and interviews with two children placed in the home at the time of the review. Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Generally, Lark was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. However, the home needs to make a minor repair to their facility, improvement in the rotation of food items to guarantee freshness, develop emancipation programs, develop fair and appropriate consequences for house violations, ensure the security of all residents, and provide each resident with sufficient clothing.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide a corrective action plan within 15 business days from the receipt of this report. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact DeWitt Roberts at (626) 293-1101.

JTM: DR: CC

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer
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**Lark Group Home
165 East Virginia Street
Rialto, CA 92376
(909) 820-0386
License No.: 360911164
Rate Classification Level: 8**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Lark Group Home (Lark) is located in a quiet residential neighborhood. The home was properly maintained, and blended well with other houses on the block.

The interior of the home was generally clean and had comfortable furniture, which was in good condition. The kitchen was organized, clean, and overall in good condition. However, the wooden face of a locked kitchen drawer was split around the lock and posed a potential safety hazard.

The bedrooms were comfortable and decorated by the residents with pictures, posters, toys, knick-knacks, and other personal property.

The exterior of the home offered a large backyard and covered patio. The facility had a basketball hoop, bicycles, weights, a slant board, and an organ. There were two computers available for the residents' use, board games, TVs, DVD, and two Playstation electronic games. There were encyclopedias, age-appropriate books and other reading material for the children to utilize.

There was a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit. However, there were three outdated packages of lunch meat in the garage freezer. Staff discarded these during the review.

Recommendations

1. Lark management:

- a. Repair/replace the wooden split face of the locked kitchen drawer.**
- b. Develop a system of review and rotation of food items to maintain freshness and avoid spoilage.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents met Lark's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Both residents received an initial assessment after being admitted into the program.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSP) were current, realistic, measurable, and time specific. Both the residents and their placement workers were participants in the development and update of the NSP.

One resident's quarterly report was current, comprehensive, timely, and focused on the goals in the resident's NSP. The other resident was not in placement long enough to require a quarterly report.

The residents were receiving individual and group therapy.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents were enrolled in and attending school. One resident required and had a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The other resident had an IEP meeting scheduled for the day following our review. Both resident case records contained past or current semester report cards and/or progress reports. Residents reported they were provided a sufficient amount of daily educational stimulation away from school. The residents stated that the administration and staff have been supportive of their academic progress.

Development of daily living skills was a part of the Lark's program. The residents were involved in the daily household chores and personal care.

One of the residents was eligible to receive emancipation services, but was not enrolled in any emancipation training and/or independent living courses and was not offered the opportunity to participate in the Agency's emancipation program. This was discussed with Lark administration at the exit conference. The Agency will work with the residents' placement workers to get the residents enrolled in E-step, an Independent Living Program and/or an emancipation training course. One resident, who was over 14 years of age, was appropriately provided information on vocational service programs. The residents were not currently employed.

Recommendation

2. Lark management:

- a. Develop and implement a plan that will provide the applicable residents with emancipation services.**

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The home follows a monthly activity schedule and residents also have the opportunity to provide input into the Agency's activities.

Residents received encouragement to participate in activities that they desired. Many of the outings occurred on weekends.

Transportation is provided to residents to and from activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

There were six residents placed in Lark Group Home at the time of the review. A review of two case files was conducted for the two Los Angeles County residents prescribed psychotropic medication.

Comments:

The residents had current medical authorizations that were filed with the court, or authorizations were submitted to court for approval. Documentation existed confirming that the prescribing psychiatrist routinely saw the residents for a review of their medication.

Medication distribution logs were properly maintained.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights**Method of assessment – Resident interviews****Sample size for resident interviews: Two****Comments:**

The residents were presented with the policies, rules and regulations when arriving in placement. One resident felt that the rules were generally fair as were the consequences for not following them. The other resident felt that the consequences were not always fair and reported that if a resident was on restriction, the resident would be assigned other resident's chores. This was discussed with Lark administration, who confirmed the resident's statements. The Agency's Program Statement indicated that continued offenses would result in the "assignment of additional duties, without free time."

One resident felt safe in the home. The other resident stated he did not feel safe. His primary concern was being "picked" on by one resident in particular and that staff was not protecting him. This was discussed with Lark administration at the exit conference. The administration stated they were aware of the resident's concern and was monitoring the interactions amongst the residents.

Residents felt that they were generally treated with respect by the staff. The residents indicated that a sufficient number of staff were always present in the home. The residents gave the Agency an overall favorable rating.

Resident chores included the maintenance of their own rooms and common areas, which the residents did not feel were too difficult.

The residents expressed overall satisfaction with the food. However, one resident reported that if he was "timed out" in his room, he would not receive the same portions of food as other residents, and the number of snacks would be fewer. This was

discussed with Lark administration, who stated that the Agency never limited residents' snacks and that snacks are available for all residents.

The residents were able to have telephone contact with their placement workers as they wished and felt that their phone calls and visits were permitted with sufficient privacy. The residents indicated that they had religious freedom and felt that staff was culturally sensitive to each resident's background and ethnicity.

The residents stated that their health care needs were being met, they had been informed about medication administered, and were aware of their legal right to refuse medication.

Recommendations

3. Lark management:

- a. Ensure residents are not assigned the chores of other residents as a means of discipline.**
- b. Ensure the safety and well-being of all residents and continue to monitor the interaction amongst residents.**
- c. Counsel residents with regard to their insecurity concerns and promote positive peer interactions.**
- d. Ensure that food is never used as a means of behavior modification or consequence. Provide all residents the same access to meals and snacks.**

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents' clothes were of sufficient quality. One resident did not have a bathrobe. The children and clothing logs confirmed that at least \$50 per month is allocated for clothing purchases. The residents were able to select their own clothes.

Allowance logs were maintained. The children and records confirmed that they were receiving, at least the base rate minimum weekly allowance for their age and had the ability to earn more.

Residents were provided with a sufficient amount of appropriate personal care and grooming supplies.

Sufficient storage space was provided. Secured storage was provided for personal property, if needed.

The residents were provided with the opportunity and encouragement to maintain a life book/photo album.

Recommendation

- 4. Lark management ensure each child is supplied with sufficient clothes to meet DCFS clothing standards.**